

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
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R 101616Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9639
INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 04208

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR ML FR
SUBJ: GISCARD'S UPCOMING VISIT TO MALI: FEB 13-15

REF: BAMAKO 557

1. IN RECENT DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF, QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA (DE LA ROCHERE) EXPLAINED GISCARD'S DECISION TO VISIT MALI ON TWO GROUNDS. THE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY VISITED TWO EQUATORIAL STATES (THE CAE AND GABON), AND WANTED NEXT TO VISIT A SAHEL COUNTRY, GIVEN HOUPHOUET AND SENGHOR'S "COMPREHENSION" OF THE REASONING BEHIND GISCARD'S WISH TO DELAY VISITING THESE TWO FAITHFUL FRIENDS. FOR THE OBVIOUS POLITICAL REASONS, CHAD AND MAURITANIA WERE ELIMINATED, LEAVING NIGER AND MALI. THE LATTER WAS SELECTED BECAUSE NO FRENCH PRESIDENT HAD VISITED IT. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, MALI WAS CHOSEN IN KEEPING WITH FRENCH POLICY OF TRYING TO COUNTER CHARGES OF NEO-COLONIALISM AND THE LIKE BY
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SHOWING THAT PROGRESSIVE REGIMES, TOO, HAVE CLOSE TIES WITH FRANCE.

2. DE LA ROCHERE COMMENTED THAT SOME OF MALI'S MODERATE NEIGHBORS WERE LESS THAN HAPPY WITH GISCARD'S GOING TO A COUNTRY WHOSE SOVIET CONNECTIONS PREOCCUPY THEM. BUT THE FRENCH WISH TO ENCOURAGE "CONCERTATION" IN WEST

AFRICA, AND ARE NOT TOO CONCERNED ABOUT MALI'S ARMS AND OTHER TIES WITH THE SOVIETS. "NEW" SOVIET ARMS DELIVERIES HAVE BEEN MODEST, HE SAID, AND CONSIST OF MATERIAL ABOUT TWENTY YEARS OLD NEEDED TO REPLACE EVEN OLDER MATERIAL NOW TOTALLY USELESS.

3. WHILE MALI SUFFERS FROM THE INEFFICIENCIES AND EXCESSES OF ITS "SOCIALISTIC" ECONOMY, DE LA ROCHERE SAID, IT IS MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT IN AGRICULTURE AND FINANCIAL REFORM. HENCE HE ANTICIPATED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A MODEST INCREASE IN FRENCH ASSISTANCE DURING THE VISIT. THIS WILL PROBABLY BE IN THE FIELDS OF AGRICULTURE, AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND, PERHAPS, MINERALS EXPLORATION.

4. COMMENT: THE FRENCH ARE PROBABLY LESS BLASE ABOUT SOVIET ACTIVITY IN MALI THAN DE LA ROCHERE WOULD HAVE ONE BELIEVE. IF, AS SEEMS LIKELY, GISCARD'S VISIT MEETS SOME OF ITS OBJECTIVES, IT WILL HAVE SERVED WESTERN INTERESTS, AS SUGGESTED BY REFTTEL.
RUSH

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